

Scottish Election 2026: Information and questions to share with candidates

Pregnancy and baby loss in Scotland

Across the UK, around **13 babies die** before, during or shortly after birth every day. And there's still much uncertainty around the numbers and rates of pregnancy loss, with evidence suggesting **15 out of every 100 pregnancies** end in miscarriage in the UK.

Whilst stillbirth and neonatal mortality rates have declined in Scotland since 2010, we know that they remain higher than some other European countries, and recently progress to reduce rates has been inconsistent.

What needs to change?

The Sands and Tommy's Joint Policy Unit have proposed the Government set targets to reduce rates of stillbirth and neonatal deaths to save babies' lives. These targets would be focussed on matching the countries in Europe with the lowest rates.

Bereavement care

Not everyone in the UK is receiving high-quality bereavement care after pregnancy or baby loss. Where someone lives and their background can affect their chances of getting the bereavement care they need.

Sands lead the way in setting the standards for high-quality bereavement care through the National Bereavement Care Pathway programmes. A Health Board is providing good bereavement care if they are meeting the National Bereavement Care Pathway (NBCP) Scotland project standards.

This must include ensuring parents are offered opportunities to make memories, receive care in suitable environments, for example in sound-proofed bereavement rooms, and are cared for by staff with bereavement care training.

What needs to change?

The next Government must commit to supporting Health Boards to sustainably embed the National Bereavement Care Pathway standards.

Mental health support

We know that currently too many bereaved parents cannot access the specialist mental health care they need through the NHS in Scotland.

In 2025, only 8% of bereaved parents in Scotland who felt they needed specialist mental health support after baby loss told Sands that they were able to access this through the NHS.

What needs to change?

Every bereaved parent must be able to access specialist mental health support at a time and a place which is right for them. Every Health Board must commission specialist mental health pathways to support bereaved parents.

Questions to ask candidates:

1. In July 2025, Sands baby loss charity published their Lost in the System report which heard the experiences of bereaved parents accessing mental health care. They found that only 8% of bereaved parents in Scotland could access the mental health care they needed through the NHS. What will you do to change this?
2. When a baby dies, every bereaved parent should expect to receive high quality, compassionate, bereavement care. This should be delivered by dedicated bereavement staff who have the time and training they need to deliver compassionate care. How will you ensure that every bereaved parent receives high quality bereavement care?
3. The rates of stillbirth and neonatal death in Scotland are higher than other countries. The Sands and Tommy's Joint Policy Unit have suggested targets based on matching countries with the lowest rates. Would you support targets to help save babies' lives?

* As a charity, Sands must remain politically neutral. This means we will never endorse a political party, candidate or try to influence how someone should vote. Whilst we actively encourage you to use our reports, statistics and key messages, we would ask that you try to make sure candidates don't get the impression that you are speaking on behalf of the charity. This will help ensure we always remain politically neutral as a charity. Thank you so much in advance for helping us do this.